182 561 621 from the fact that the *jago*, elders of the dyil clan, and other lineage representatives, hold political authority quite apart from the age organisation. The age sets take no part in disputes within the settlement, but when the settlement as a whole goes to war the warriors "... are mobilised into age sets."(1) Howell suggests that formerly the age organisation had special military functions, but whether this was so or not, the age sets seem to fulfil a more peaceful purpose today, and form a useful basis for organising the relations of generations for social purposes.

The Ngol Ceremony

561 ●624 At the *ngol* ceremony a war leader *(ban)* is elected. The *ban* has no administrative or political functions. His duties consist in organising the mobilisation of the warriors and presiding at communal feasts at which people assemble in age sets. His age mates may assist him in his cultivations. After the *ngol* ceremony each age set is given a new name.

Initiation

561 881 There are no elaborate rites of initiation among the Shilluk. Participation in a dance, the *cong bul* marks the initiation of a youth in the age organisation. The *cong bul* is a social affair which is arranged periodically with the permission of the *jago* of the settlement. It is not a ceremony of initiation in the normal sense but merely a formal recognition by the community that a lad has reached adult status and can take part in a man's obligations and privileges. Previous to the *cong bul* a youth is restricted in that he may not fight with spears, take part in war or in any dance other than one held for children. Before the *cong bul* he is not allowed to wear certain kinds of ornaments.

The *cong bul* is attended by a boy when he is 14-16 years old, or earlier if he has to take over the duties of family head through the death of his father. A youth normally obtains his father's permission and another man is appointed to act as his sponsor. The sponsor ceremonially adorns the youth with ornaments before he enters the dance. At the beginning of the dance the warriors salute the *jago*, advance in formation and fling themselves before him.

[553 556] At the time of the *cong bul* the initiated is usually presented with two spears by his father. Rich men give their sons an ox and they take their ox-names from these animals. An ox so given is kept until it dies and then a new one of the same colour is substituted. After the *cong bul* the initiates visit relatives and travel round the countryside for a few months.

CLANS AND LINEAGES

614 There are about a hundred patrilineal clans in Shillukland. Each clan has a name which is preceded by the word *kwar*, meaning 'descendants of'. All clansmen trace their descent from a common ancestor. They are bound by distinct rules of behaviour, by special observances and are exogamous.(2)

613 614 The Shilluk clans, like all Nilotic clans, are dispersed, each clan

(1) Howell, *S.N.R.* 1941, Vol.XXIV, p.57. (2) *Ibid.*, p.47.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

tion, from which he may have deducted recognized fees for his services in the same way as the Nuer and Dinka functionaries did, or did he appropriate the cattle to himself as head of the State? Was homicide a crime against society of which the *reth* was the central representative, or was it merely a private delict? These questions are relevant and fundamental to the whole problem of the nature of Shilluk law and the position of the monarchy.

As among other Nilotic people, we are faced with the difficulty of finding out how homicide was composed before the advent of the present Government. Among the Shilluk it would really be necessary to have information dating back to a period before the advent of the Turkish régime in 1867. It is doubtful, of course, whether the Turks ever had sufficient control over the Shilluk to have any direct influence on their laws and legal procedures, but since they attempted to administer the country through the agency of the *reth*, at any rate during some periods of their administration, they doubtless influenced him in this particular connexion. Except for vague references to the existence of homicide, to internecine strife, and the warlike character of the Shilluk, I know of no precise mention of this subject in early literature.

Blood-funds and inter-settlement fighting

Shilluk settlements have certain distinctive characteristics including the restriction of age-set names and the ritual of the age-grade system within the settlement. Although now fast disappearing, and no longer of great significance owing to the repressive policy of the Government, the primary function of the age-grade organization seems to have been military.[1] Hofmayr on this subject says:

> Every man is a soldier and literally always under 'arms'. Every Shilluk who has ceremonially danced, is a warrior as long as he is able to bear arms. They form groups. Every settlement is independent with its own *bany* (principal singer and president). Different settlements combine and sally forth under the leadership of the eldest *bany* against their powerful enemies.[2]

The *bany* or *bang*[3] is, within the settlement, the leader of organized hostilities, which have been frequent between Shilluk settlements. His function in this connexion is brought out again and again in official documents and the attitude of the Administration has throughout been hostile. We read, for example, in the records of the Shilluk Chiefs' Council that 'The *reth* is opposed to them all as a subversive influence, but there are evidently some Chiefs who are afraid of them. Young *bany* who give trouble shall be punished and turned out.'[4] Again, in 1947:

> A *bany*, or war-lord in Shilluk, is a social institution which has been forbidden for six years in Shilluk country, and the bar is well known. . . . The *bany* . . . is essentially a leader of the youth of a section, i.e. the warrior class. It is said that in the old days, when there was little public security and each section had to look after itself, the *bany* was a useful functionary, and in so far as he co-ordinated the warriors of a section this was doubtless so. Now, any 'class consciousness' on the part of the warriors must have an aggressive tendency as it can

[1] Howell, op. cit., p. 33.
[2] Hofmayr, op. cit.
[3] Cf. the Dinka word *bany* or 'expert'—though among the Shilluk the term is restricted to the age-set leader, whose duties are primarily military. See also Howell, op. cit., p. 60.
[4] Records of Shilluk Chiefs' Council meeting 1934 (unpublished).

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

have no value in defence.[1] The *bany* is the symbol of this aggressive spirit. The *bany* himself is frequently an elderly man, and not a 'fire-brand' and his functions are passive. He is appointed, just like any other Chief, and when his people go to war he is carried as a mascot on a bed. He takes no active part and, like most Shilluk institutions of a seditious nature, the *bany*, like the *ajireth*, is powerless in himself and depends on public support.

On this occasion Nyigir settlement appointed a *bany* and the Chief failed to report the matter to the *reth*, or to the District Commissioner. A few days later Nyigir carried their *bany* into Golbainy, the neighbouring settlement to the north, and behaved in an aggressive manner, singing and carrying their shields. This challenging demonstration was reported in Fashoda settlement next day, though the royal capital was avoided. The *reth* himself, hearing singing of which he had not been notified personally, intervened between Nyigir, lined up on their border and carrying their *bany*, and Fashoda who were mobilizing to defend themselves . . . An old feud exists between Nyigir and Fashoda. In the time of *reth* Nyidhok (*circa* 1840) Nyigir attacked and burned the Royal Village of Fashoda. In 1917 Nyigir killed a Government policeman and assistance had to be obtained from Malakal and Tewfikia (where the mounted police had recently gone from Kodok). Nyigir is the largest Shilluk section, and has a strong element of intractable *kwareth*, all closely related and descendants of *reth* Awin, who, I know from experience, are hard to control. As far as I can judge this was not a seditious movement against the *reth* himself, but a major fight round Fashoda might have led to anything.[2]

I have quoted this incident, as it is recorded, not as evidence of subversive action against the person of the *reth*, or any threat to depose him, but because it is clear that the *reth* is concerned, even had the incident been farther removed than his own capital, in maintaining peaceful relations between the settlements. Further, the incident is typical of the hostilities which have so frequently occurred and been sustained for long periods. Referring to *reth* Fadiet's time (1903–17) Hofmayr says:

> There was a great fight between Owaci and Tworo. Banholzer relates: 'A man from Owaci had been bewitched in Tworo and was kept in a village. They asked him how many men had been killed in the last fighting, but he refused to answer. Thereupon he was murdered and his body thrown into the river and anchored by wooden pegs, but the body broke away and floated downstream. The people of Owaci got to hear of it and caused the great fight in which many Tworo people were killed. The survivors fled to the other bank of the river and until now the Tworo people say they are allowed to kill Owaci people as the price of blood.'[3]

This feud, referred to by Hofmayr in 1903, is of particular interest because there are accurate records of its continuance later. For example, between the years 1931 and 1932 there were thirteen incidents of clashes and several of homicide, and during this period twenty-seven men of Thworo and nineteen of Owaci were killed and larger numbers were wounded. The feud was finally settled in 1932 by a peace ceremony performed by the *reth* which will be described later.

These feuds, and in particular the feuds between Owaci and Thworo, have been mentioned because they show a persistence which does not seem characteristic of feuds among the Nuer and the Dinka, and also because casualties were very numerous.

[1] The meaning of this statement is not clear. If there is aggression there must presumably also be defence.

[2] Thomson, W. P. G., unpublished Government Records.

[3] Hofmayr, op. cit.

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

will get her a calf-skin. The mother of the girl is supposed to tie the calf-skin the first time the girl wears it to a dance. If her mother is dead, then a woman the same age as her mother ties it for her.

Some Begging Customs of the Women.

The Shilluk women seem to derive much pleasure from begging for cattle from some of the richer men of the tribe. The occasion is made a holiday for the women of the village, and they go forth in their finest clothes. If the recipient of their honour lives at some distance, the start is made early in the morning, and all the women of the village go. If there are too many women in the village, then the women of a certain age go. The women of two different villages will not unite to go on these expeditions. The proper season for these begging dances is just before the rains begin, though they may be held any time during the dry season.

The women decide upon the man to be honoured by their party before they start. Occasionally, they honour a man from their own village, but in that case they only ask for a sheep. Often they go five or six miles, and sometimes they go as far as fifteen or twenty miles. While they are gone the men must stay at home to care for the babies. Often, on such occasions, a mother will leave a tiny baby at home for the whole day. Usually, they object to leaving their babies at home, but for this event it is different.

The man to be honoured is not warned, lest he hide from them. Should the man they are seeking be absent from the village, the women hang a string of beads made from the shell of the ostrich egg (rek) in the enclosure between his two houses. When he returns, he says, "Who brought this rek?" His wife replies, "The women brought it." He asks, "What do they want?" His wife replies, "An ox." His wife says "They will return." He says, "They will find nothing." His wife replies, "So many should have something, I have children, so many women should not be refused by red lips." When the women return they usually get the ox.

Before the women start on such a trip they choose a leader, unless they already have one. She is called a baña. She has the powers of a magistrate. If any trouble occurs among the women, she acts as judge. She is crowned with the rek, as the chief of the village is crowned. In

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

484 562 624 future expeditions of the same party she will be chief. In the village she has the right to judge cases that are strictly between women.

431 425 484 626 [535 513] A man may refuse to give an ox, making the excuse that he has nothing to give. Then the women will mutter, saying, "He kills us by making us stand in the hot sun." They seem to think he is cheating them. The man's wife may intercede on their behalf. She will put on her husband's cloth, put a rek about her neck, anoints her body with oil, and then takes the chief's spear, and dances among the women. For such a display the chief will usually relent, and tell his young men to bring out the ox. He may be very churlish, and refuse to give them what they desire. They depart, muttering curses on him and his family. If in a short time sickness should occur in his family it is attributed to the ill-will of these women. He sends a messenger to call them. They come and get the ox. He then tells them of the sickness in his family, and the women order ashes to be brought. The women fill their hands with the ashes. They then pray after this manner, "You are God. We were refused an ox by this chief. He now has sickness. We are no longer angry at him. Permit him to escape." Next they spit on the ashes they hold in their hands, and then sprinkle them all over the members of his household. The women then depart, and the patient recovers.

[753 755]

431 425 [788] When the women go to a chief and he gives them an ox, they sprinkle ashes about his house as a blessing. The ox is taken to their village, and it may be killed immediately, though it is more likely to be kept for a time. When the animal is killed the brisket is given to the old men of the village. The old women take the rump, and the younger women divide the remainder of the meat.

425 556 431 [533] A man is glad to have the women come to beg from him, even when he refuses to give them what they desire. It is a great compliment to have the women come, as it shows that his fame has spread abroad as a rich and generous man. Then, too, the ceremony is such as to feed the vanity of the man singled out for the honour. The women usually rush up to the house shouting and singing his praises. They sing songs about his bravery, and tell of h[illegible]tues, but the chorus of their song usually is: "Brother, lead out that ox."

425 431 After a chief has given an ox, the women go away saying that he is a fine man, and a great chief. The women seem to demand a great deal. Once, in a case observed, the ox was given. The women did not watch